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Role as CIA Source Denied by Mexican

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Miguel Nassar Haro, former chief of Mexico's national security agency, surfaced in Los Angeles on Wednesday to heatedly deny that he was a CIA spy or an international car thief.

Nassar Haro's appearance in the Century City office of attorney Marvin Mitchelson came shortly after the lawyer filed an \$11-million libel suit in Superior Court against Time Magazine.

In the suit, Mitchelson said the magazine called Nassar Haro "a conspirator" in a car theft ring, and that he could not be prosecuted in this country because he was a key source for the CIA on Mexican and Central American affairs.

William H. Kennedy, fired as U.S. attorney in San Diego earlier this month by the Reagan Administration, reportedly lost his job because he publicly identified Nassar Haro as "an indispensable" CIA source. The Kennedy statement was printed in the March 26 edition of the San Diego Union.

Mitchelson said he has demanded that the newspaper print a retraction within 20 days or face a libel suit similar to that filed against Time.

Spokesmen for both the magazine and the newspaper said they will stick by their stories.

Mitchelson said Time's April 12 story was based largely on the Union's reporting of the month before.

The 52-year-old Nassar Haro, speaking through an interpreter Wednesday, emphatically and at times angrily said that he was in no way involved in the car theft ring and never worked for the CIA.

"No, absolutely no," he said.

Mitchelson said Nassar Haro had served in the Directorate of Federal Security (DFS)—Mexico's equivalent of the FBI—for 20 years, and headed the agency from 1977 until last January.

Nassar Haro said he resigned his

post for personal reasons. Mitchelson said later that his client had resigned because his principal backer in the Mexican government had failed in his bid for the presidential nomination. In any case, Mitchelson said, the resignation had nothing to do with the car theft ring, allegations of CIA connections or American news stories.

In its March 26 story, the Union said Kennedy's attempts to prosecute Nassar Haro for his role in an \$8.4 million auto theft ring were "thwarted by top U.S. Officials" because the Mexican lawman was "a most important source in Mexico and Central America."

Implicated in News Report

The ring smuggled stolen cars from Orange and San Diego counties for sale in Mexico.

The newspaper said that a federal Grand Jury in San Diego returned sealed indictments against 28 persons involved in the ring last year. Last July, the story said, 14 suspects, including three Mexican DFS agents, were arrested.

"Two of these suspects implicated Nassar," the newspaper said. Ken-

nedy was given as a source for the story.

"That's not true," Mitchelson said Wednesday. "There was only one member of the DFS ever involved in this (and) Nassar had fired him. . . . I don't know where Mr. Kennedy got his information. . . . but (it) is very, very incomplete. And Mr. Nassar wasn't being protected by the CIA or any other agency in this country."

Nassar Haro identified the fired DFS agent as Ricardo Rodriguez. He said he fired the man in April, 1981, for getting into a drunken altercation at a sports stadium.

He also said another man named Cipriano Rodriguez, whom he had repeatedly turned down when he applied to join the DFS, had offered to sell him a yellow van. But, said Nassar Haro, he told Rodriguez to take the matter up with the DFS' purchasing agent.

The Union story said—and the Time story essentially repeated—that an FBI informant reported seeing Nassar Haro "receive a stolen yellow van from one of his agents."

Mitchelson said that neither the newspaper nor the magazine tried to reach Nassar Haro for comment on their stories. "He was contactable," the attorney said, "and no one contacted him."

Nassar Haro said he has been working as a business consultant in Mexico City.

"The story is obvious," Mitchelson said. "What's happened is that Mr. Kennedy came into office last November, picked up the remnant of an investigation. . . . One of the thieves (in the auto theft ring) said that they delivered. . . . a yellow van to Mr. Nassar. Mr. Kennedy may have chosen to believe it."

He said Nassar Haro "probably is an indispensable source because he has devoted his (professional) life to catching certain terrorists. . . . But I can't tell you why President Reagan or anyone else put pressure on Kennedy to resign."

Nassar Haro said that as head of the DFS he has only "exchanged information" of international interest with the FBI.